Decline in procurement of wheat and Rice

1403. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE : Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that procurement of wheat and rice during the 1991-92 marketing season in the country has shown a substantial decrease ;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor ; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take to meet the rising demands of the Public Distribution System in the country ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD (SHRI TARUN GOGOI) : (a) Yes, Sir. During 1991-92 Rabi marketing season, a quantity of 77.52 lakh tonnes of wheat was procured as against 110.65 lakh tonnes during 1990-91 season. The procurement of rice during 1991-92 marketing is still in progress and will continue upto September, 1992. As on 4th May, 1992, a quantity of 96.15 lakh tonnes of rice (including paddy in terms of rice) has been procured as compared with 118.76 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period of 1990-91.

(b) The reasons for low procurement of wheat and rice during Rabi/Kharif 1991-92 are as under :—

WHEAT : Wheat is procured on voluntary basis as a minimum support price operation, the farmer being free to sell elsewhere if he gets a price better than the minimum support price. During 1991-92, market arrivals were low and there was comparatively higher percentage of purchase by private trade due to higher market prices.

RICE : Due to less and scanty rainfall during monsoon season of 1990-91 and consequent loss to kharif production to some extent, market arrivals were less.

(c) In order to improve the stock position in the Central Pool, all possible steps like payment of incentive bonus to farmers by Central as well as State Governments of Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, opening of adequate number of purchase centres to cover more areas, reducing stock limits etc. are being taken to maximise the procurement of wheat and strict enforcement of levy order for procurement of levy rice from millers/dealers

Delivery of levy sugar

1404. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 204 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 22nd November, 1991 and state ;

(a) whether Government have received the report of Government of Maharashtra in the matter of irregularities in the delivery of levy sugar ; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and the action taken by Government thereon ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD (SHRI TARUN GOGOI) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The report of the Government of Maharashtra is under examination.

Impurities in foodgrains supplied through PDS

1405. SHRI VIREN J. SHAH : Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the press report published in the Indian Express of 11th April, 1992 about impurities to the extent of 49.5 per cent in the foodgrains supplied through the public distribution system ;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard ;

(c) what steps Government have taken to ensure strict quality control at the time of procurement of grains ; and

(d) what are the details of instructions issued to State Governments in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD (SHRI TARUN GOGOI): (a) to (d) The press report published in the Indian Express of 11th April, 1992 as also its base report in the Economic Times of 23rd March, 1992 has attracted the attention of the Government. These reports are factually incorrect and are based on erroneous appreciation of the technical specifications laid down in consultation with the State Governments for the procurement of paddy and wheat.

Moisture permitted to an extent of 18% in case of paddy and 14% in case of wheat can in no way be considered to be an impurity in the stocks as it being an essential component of any living organism including foodgrains. Similarly the varietal admixture/admixture of other foodgrains permitted in paddy and wheat to an extent of 10% and 6% respectively can hardly be considered as serious defect as such an admixture is in no way deficient in food value but is also inevitable under the existing agricultural practices in our country. The same applies to slightly damaged grains permitted up to 10% in wheat as the BIS definition for it stipulates—"kernels or pieces of kernels that are damaged or discoloured superficially so as not to affect the quality of the material."

If these items are taken out, the permitted refraction for paddy is only 8% (foreign matter 2%, damaged/discoloured/sprouted/weevilled grains 3% & immature/shrunken/shrivelled grains 3%) and in case of wheat it is only 15.75% (foreign matter 0.75%, damaged grains 3% and shrivelled and brokens 12%).

While brokens carry the same food value as that of the whole grain, immature, shrivelled and shrunken grains are related to the agro-climatic conditions and can not be manipulated. Considering the agricultural practices and agro-climatic conditions in our country the limits for various refractions permitted in the specifications are reasonable.

Only such foodgrains which are fit for human consumption and conform to Prevention of Food Adultration Act standards are issued by the FCI to state Governments or their agencies for distribution through PDS.

As per the standing instructions all the procuring agencies have to ensure that all foodgrains procurement conform to the prescribed specifications.

Dehoarding operations launched by Delhi Administration

1406. DR. SANJAYA SINH: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state;

(a) whether the de-hoarding operation launched by the Delhi Administration since January 24-25, 1992 is still continuing;

(b) if so, the quantity of food items de-hoarded so far alongwith their value; and

(c) the number of cases filed so far against the alleged hoarders?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD (SHRI TARUN GOGOI): (a) The checkings of licences under various Control Orders issued by the Food and Supplies Department of Delhi Administration is a continuing and normal activity. A number of surprise checkings/raids are conducted on the basis of intelligence gathered by the Department and complaints received from the public.

(b) 3,40,177 quintals of food items have been dehoarded so far, the value of which is over Rs. 54 crores.

(c) 9 cases have been filed so far against the hoarders.

Central Warehousing Corporation

1407. SHRI ANAND PRAKASH GAUTAM: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Warehousing capacity and business of the Central Warehousing Corporation, between